

## Range extensions and noteworthy records for mainland Ecuador

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Until the publication of Ridgely & Greenfield (2001) knowledge of avian distribution in Ecuador was incomplete and reliant on relevant but geographically adjacent and outdated sources such as Hilty & Brown (1986), as well as general checklists (Ridgely *et al.* 1998). Now, however, ornithologists and birdwatchers alike possess a ready resource to assess the import of their sightings. Nonetheless, distributions are a first approximation, especially for rare or poorly known species, and will be refined as new data are reported (e.g. Freile 2004). Here, I present noteworthy records which enhance our knowledge of bird distributions in mainland Ecuador.

### Species accounts

#### **CURVE-BILLED TINAMOU** *Nothoprocta curvirostris*

One observed closely on a grassy road and adjacent pasture, on a ridge at 3,000 m, 2 km north-east of Hacienda Zuleta (12 km east of San Pablo, Imbabura), on 25 June 2006. Uncommon and somewhat local in shrubby *páramo* and pastures, usually near patches of woodland, from south-east Carchi (Guandera Biological Reserve), southern Imbabura (Laguna Cuicocha) and Pichincha, south to eastern Azuay (Sigsig and Oña) and Zamora-Chinchipe (Cerro Toledo) (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). Generally scarce and infrequently encountered in Ecuador, mine is the third published locality on the eastern slope of Ecuador, all of them on the inter-Andean side.

#### **TIGER HERON** *Tigrisoma* sp.

An immature on 16 September 2000 at La Perla reserve, 1 km south of La Concordia, Pichincha, at 200 m. Given the brief view and the difficulty in identifying immature tiger herons, I was unable to distinguish the species. Rufescent Tiger Heron *T. lineatum* is very rare in lowlands of western Ecuador, with several old records from the río Peripa (Manabí/Los Ríos), Vinces (Guayas) and a sight record of an immature from the río Palenque on 23 October 1997 (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). Given the low elevation, slow-flowing stream and distance from the foothills, it appears probable that my observation was of a Rufescent Tiger Heron. However, there appears to be a resident population of Fasciated Tiger Heron *T. fasciatum* near Playa de Oro, in northern Esmeraldas, at 100 m, and it is suspected that most specimen records away from the río Peripa and Vinces area refer to *T. fasciatum* (O. Jahn *et al.* in Ridgely & Greenfield 2001).

**SNOWY EGRET** *Egretta thula*

One seen by the author and M. & D. Weller on 21 January 2005 by a roadside pond at 2,100 m, c.5 km from hacienda San Isidro, 4 km south-west of Cosanga, Napo. Uncommon to locally very common in the lowlands of east and west Ecuador, with small numbers occasionally reported from lakes in the central valley (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006), but mine is the first published record from the eastern slope of Ecuador.

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

An adult observed, and its vocalisations recorded, at La Perla reserve, 1 km south of La Concordia, Pichincha (200 m), on 13–14 August 2004. Rare to locally fairly common in mangrove, tidal flats, freshwater marshes and forested margins of waterbodies in the lowlands of west and north-east Ecuador and in the northern highlands, but more numerous in south-west Ecuador, from Manabí south. Presumably once resident around lakes Yaguarcocha and San Pablo, Imbabura, as well as in the Parque Carolina marshes, in Quito, Pichincha (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006). My record represents the first recent confirmed record from Pichincha.

**DARK-BILLED CUCKOO** *Coccyzus melacoryphus*

One observed at close range for several minutes on 18 and 25 April 1999, at hacienda San Francisco, 15 km north-west of Ibarra, Imbabura, at 2,300 m. Identification was initially uncertain, as the bird appeared to have a whiter throat like a Mangrove Cuckoo *C. minor*. Hilty (2003) remarked on the striking similarity between the two, though *C. minor* is smaller with a black bill and plain brown upperparts. However, *C. minor* is unknown in Ecuador, with the nearest recent record being from extreme north-east Colombia (Strewe & Navarro 2004), and is very rarely recorded away from coastal mangrove. Otherwise, the combination of grey cap, distinct black mask and rich buff underparts does not recall any other species in Ecuador. On 25 April, with R. Jonsson, playback of both species was performed. That of Dark-billed Cuckoo elicited a dramatic response, confirming the identification.

The status of the species in Ecuador is complex and poorly understood. In eastern Ecuador it is an uncommon to locally fairly common austral migrant, but in the west is known only from a few specimens and several sight reports that are believed to pertain to austral migrants, but there is apparently a resident population in the extreme south-west. Recorded mostly below 1,000 m, occasionally to at least 1,900 m and sometimes even higher (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006); away from the south-west there are very few records, the nearest from Quito. This high-elevation sighting represents a new provincial record and an 80 km northerly range extension.

**BLACK-THROATED BRILLIANT** *Heliodoxa schreibersii*

A female was observed by myself and five other observers at midday, feeding on flowers in a large patch of *Wercklea* sp. (Malvaceae), 5 km south of Baeza, on 8 July 2002, at 1,900 m. The combination of curved bill, dark underparts, with an obvious

buff malar is unique on the east slope. This hummingbird is rare to uncommon, and seemingly local, in lower growth of humid forest in the eastern lowlands, and in foothill forest at the base of the Andes. Recorded mostly below 1,250 m, locally in the south-east to 1,450 m in the Cordillera del Cóndor near Chinapintza (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006), this sighting represents a significant altitude extension and a new foodplant species (Heynen 1999a).

**AMETHYST-THROATED SUNANGEL** *Heliangelus amethysticollis*

During a bird survey of volcán Sumaco, an adult male was seen well on 18 November 2003 at two separate sites near the crater lake 10 km south-east of the summit, at 2,450 m. No other hummingbird on the east slope at this altitude possesses the unmistakable combination of a pink gorget and white pectoral band. Uncommon to locally fairly common at the borders of montane forest and in adjacent clearings, in the subtropical and lower temperate zones, on the east slope of the Andes in southern Ecuador, the species was previously recorded only from Morona-Santiago (Gualaceo–Limón road and Cordillera de Cutucú) and Zamora-Chinchipec, at 1,900–2,700 m (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990, Heynen 1999b, Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006). My record constitutes a 210 km northerly range extension and a new record for Napo province.

**HOARY PUFFLEG** *Haplophaedia lugens*

One observed by myself, P. Herrera V., G. George and J. Brooks on 27 April 2005, at a previously known territory at 1,800 m in a steep, forested, stream valley at Mindo Loma, 7 km north-east of Mindo, Pichincha. It was feeding on flowers of *Axinaea* (Melastomataceae), *Palicourea* (Rubiaceae) and *Besleria* (Gesneriaceae). Uncommon in the lower and middle growth of montane subtropical forest on the west slope of the Andes in western Pichincha and in south-west Colombia (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001), this Chocó endemic is considered Near Threatened due to severe deforestation within its small range (BirdLife International 2005). Whilst known to feed on *Palicourea* and *Besleria* (Collar *et al.* 1992, Heynen 1999c, Matheus 2002), *Axinaea* is a new foodplant.

**UNDULATED ANTPITTA** *Grallaria squamigera*

On 27 June 2002 an adult was observed at 2,200 m on the Guacamayos trail, 6 km south-east of Cosanga, Napo, for c.5 minutes at c.15 m distance, foraging leisurely in the middle of the trail. Good light conditions, as well as the bird's proximity, afforded an unmistakable view of the grey cap concolorous with the grey back, and large whitish loreal area and dark submalar. Not previously recorded from the Guacamayos ridge or San Isidro area (M. Lysinger pers. comm.). A *G. squamigera* was tape-recorded on 13 April 2004 at 2,770 m, 2.5 km south-east of the summit of volcán Sumaco, near Pavayacu on the north side of the saddle at the headwaters of río Suno. The shorter-duration song (5–6 seconds), which was repeated six times per minute, is diagnostic of *G. squamigera* rather than Giant Antpitta *G. g. gigantea*,

which has a significantly longer song (eight seconds) (Krabbe & Schulenberg 2003) and, on the east Andean slope of Ecuador, occurs only at 2,000–2,400 m. Records from the eastern cordillera are apparently more frequent than from inner or west-facing slopes. The only previous record from the vicinity is from upper Sumaco (Chapman 1926). These represent the easternmost records in Ecuador and the first for Orellana province.

#### **EASTERN KINGBIRD** *Tyrannus tyrannus*

Six seen well along the Cuenca–Molleteuro highway, 15 km south-east of Puerto Inca, Guayas province, at 800 m, on 8 October 2006. There are a few records of transients in north-western Ecuador, the furthest south from Tinalandia (P. Coopmans in Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). My record is 270 km further south. Elsewhere on the Pacific slope of central and southern South America there are relatively few records, but small numbers occur in the coastal lowlands of western Peru, south to Mollendo in Arequipa (Ridgely & Tudor 1989, Clements & Shany 2001), and there are sight reports of vagrants in Región I and II in northern Chile with one from central Chile (Jaramillo 2003).

#### **MOSS-BACKED TANAGER** *Bangsia edwardsi*

One at 1,650 m on 15 December 2001, 8 km north-northeast of Mindo, beyond Reserva Pachijal and hostería Ñanca Jatunmi. This highland Chocó endemic is locally uncommon to common in montane forest, forest borders and second-growth woodland in foothills on the west slope of the Andes in north-west Ecuador (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). This is a significant altitudinal record, as the species was previously only known to 1,100 m in this area. There is one older record from 1,700 m in Carchi (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). My record is near the upper río Pachijal Valley, an important relict forest corridor for several lowland Chocó endemics, which may be moving upslope in response to recent deforestation in the lowlands.

#### **LARGE-BILLED SEED FINCH** *Oryzoborus crassirostris*

Three males and a female near sea level, on 10 January 2005, at hacienda La Ciénega, 15 km north of Pedernales on the Cojimíes Peninsula, northern Manabí, were observed through a telescope at c.50 m range for c.5 minutes. They were perched in a leafless tree in a dry, grassy, open area. According to the owner of the hacienda, the area is inundated during particularly wet years. *O. crassirostris* is rare to uncommon and very local in the lowlands of eastern and western Ecuador. In the west, it is known from only five localities: El Placer (Esmeraldas), Lita (Imbabura), Babahoyo (Los Ríos), Santa Rosa (El Oro) and Cerro Blanco (Guayas) (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006, Krabbe & Nilsson 2003). The nearest records are from El Placer, Esmeraldas (in 1987), 170 km west-northwest, with a 19th-century record from Babahoyo, 235 km south-west of Cojimíes (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). My record is a significant range extension and a new provincial record. Currently considered Least Concern as its numbers appear to be increasing in Colombia



following deforestation (BirdLife International 2005), but it was previously listed as Near Threatened due to frequent capture for the cagebird trade (Collar *et al.* 1992, 1994). Its congeners, particularly *O. angolensis* and *O. maximiliani* are highly valued songsters and a culture of trainers and singing competitions has developed in Brazil (Sick 1993). In Ecuador, because of its evident rarity, the species is still considered Near Threatened (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, Ribadeneira 2002).

### **BAND-TAILED SIERRA FINCH** *Phrygilus alaudinus*

A male was photographed at 3,800 m on a roadside fencepost near the upper río Chimborazo, on the south side of volcán Chimborazo, on 29 January 2005. Band-tailed Sierra Finch is uncommon and somewhat local in open, arid highlands and was previously recorded only to 3,000 m in Ecuador (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006), but in Peru there are records to 3,500 m (Clements & Shany 2001), and to 4,100 m in southern Peru and Bolivia (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990).

### **RED-BREASTED BLACKBIRD** *Sturnella militaris*

An adult male was observed well for c.10 minutes adjacent to the Lago Agrio highway, 5 km north-east of Baeza on 22 January 2007, at 1,855 m. Known in eastern Ecuador to 400 m (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, 2006), in Venezuela to 950 m (Hilty 2003) and in Colombia to 1,600 m (Hilty & Brown 1986). The species is increasing and spreading, often colonising newly deforested areas (Ridgely & Tudor 1989).

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## First record of Tyrannine Woodcreeper *Dendrocicla tyrannina* for Bolivia

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Two specimens of Tyrannine Woodcreeper *Dendrocicla tyrannina* were collected, on 22 November 2001, in Área Natural de Manejo Integrado Nacional Apolobamba, Bolivia, dpto. La Paz, prov. Franz Tamayo, near the río Palcabamba (14°49'S, 68°56'W), at c.2,500 m. The specimens were mist-netted in tall, humid second-growth woodland bordering a cleared pasture, adjacent to primary montane forest, and were prepared as study skins (American Museum of Natural History [AMNH] 834016, 834017).